

Mine-Reclamation Project Wins Earth Day Awards

By Mike Gorrell
THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

The most visible signs of the reclamation work being done at a phosphate mine 11 miles north of Vernal are the deer and elk grazing on newly abundant grasses.

A mixture of grass species and native alfalfa has attracted the wildlife to contoured hummocks that have replaced the hills on which forage was limited by the dense presence of pinyon and juniper trees.

The grazing is taking place within a stone's throw of bulldozers and other heavy equipment removing a seam of gray phosphorous rock from the high-desert terrain along the foothills of the Uinta Mountains. Once the machines devour that part of the seam, they will move on to another and work will begin to reclaim the just-mined area.

For their commitment to leaving the land as good or even better than they found it, SF Phosphates

Limited Co. and Chevron Chemical Co. received "Earth Day" awards Wednesday from the Utah Division of Oil, Gas and Mining.

"These companies have operated with great concern for the environment," said division Director Jim Carter. "Their work is an excellent example of how Utah's resources can be developed in a responsible manner."

It also validates arguments that development for profit can be compatible with the maintenance of environmental values, added David Lauriski, chairman of the division's policy-making board.

The effort is well worth it, said Wade Horrocks, who oversees mining operations for SF Phosphates Limited. "That's our playground. We like to keep it nice."

When SF Phosphates Limited obtained the mine from Chevron Chemical in 1992, it continued reclamation practices initiated by Chevron. That pleased state offi-

cials because reclamation frequently occurred just months after an area was mined.

"Concurrent reclamation was a big selling point" for the companies to receive the awards, said Anthony Gallegos, a reclamation engineer in the division's minerals program. "Because of the way the ore body is mined, they can do that. A lot of open-pit mines cannot be reclaimed that way."

Bulldozers strip the surface of vegetation, then remove the thin layer of dirt on top of the phosphate-bearing formation. The excavated materials are placed to the side while miners blow apart the formation with dynamite and haul off the phosphate.

Working on ore strips often 220 feet wide, miners remove about 2.5 million tons of rock annually.

That amount yields about 900,000 tons of phosphate concentrate, which is shipped in a buried slurry line to a plant in Rock Springs, Wyo. It is converted there into a fertilizer component.

"The overburden then is replaced and recontoured to a stable and aesthetic surface," said SF Phosphates Limited's environmental specialist, Ron Ryan. Planting the vegetation reduces erosion.

Ron Stewart of the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources is not certain the reclamation work is responsible for the area's growing wildlife herds. But he has no doubt the companies have "definitely been conscientious about trying to do their best for wildlife. They've generally left the area in real nice shape."

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SALT LAKE TRIBUNE



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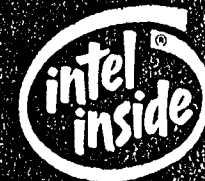
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SF Phosphates has mine, mill and pipeline

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SF Phosphates Limited Company is located 11 miles north of Vernal on U.S. Hwy. 191. The original plant was constructed in 1960 and mining operations began in 1961. In April, 1992, the mine, pipeline and fertilizer plant was purchased by J. R. Simplot Company, Boise, Idaho; and Farmland Industries, Inc., Kansas City, Missouri. SF Phosphates Limited Company was formed through this joint venture.

The success of the Vernal operation can be contributed to its dedicated work force of approximately 100 employees with average service time of 13 years. Over 1,000,000 manhours have been worked at this mine site without having a lost-time accident.

The operation consists of the mine, concentrator mill and pipeline. The mine uses surface mining techniques to extract phosphate enriched ore. The ore is then crushed into slurry form and concentrated in the mill using froth flotation techniques.

The Vernal mine and mill are capable of producing about 1.3 million tons of phosphate concentrate per year. Concentrate slurry is shipped from Vernal via a pipeline to a fertilizer plant in Rock Springs, Wyo. In Rock Springs, 400,000 tons of fertilizer product are produced annually and distributed throughout the West and Midwest for use in agricultural applications.

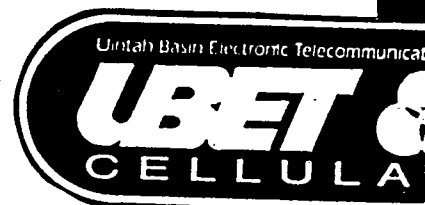
SF Phosphates is dedicated to preserving and enhancing the environment. The mine recently received a Utah Division of Oil,

Gas and Mining 1994 Earth Day Reclamation Award for their contribution to the environment through mined land reclamation. Pro-environmental actions at the mine clearly benefit many forms of wildlife.

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